

VERTIGO

Issue **24** Jun 04

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SUGGESTED FOR
MATURE READERS
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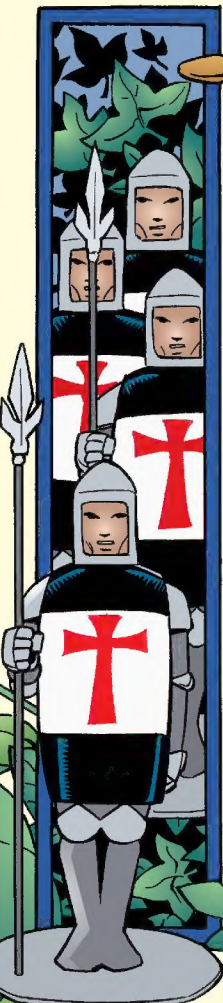
FABLES™





SUNRISE AT FABLETOWN'S UPSTATE FARM ANNEX.





The Letter
Chapter Five of
March of the
Wooden
Soldiers

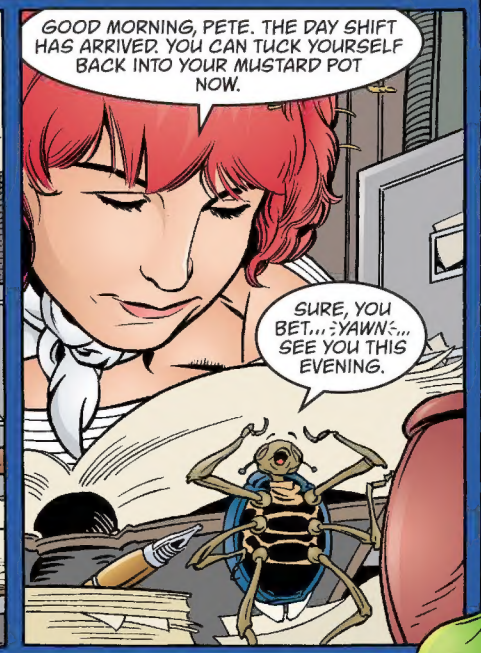
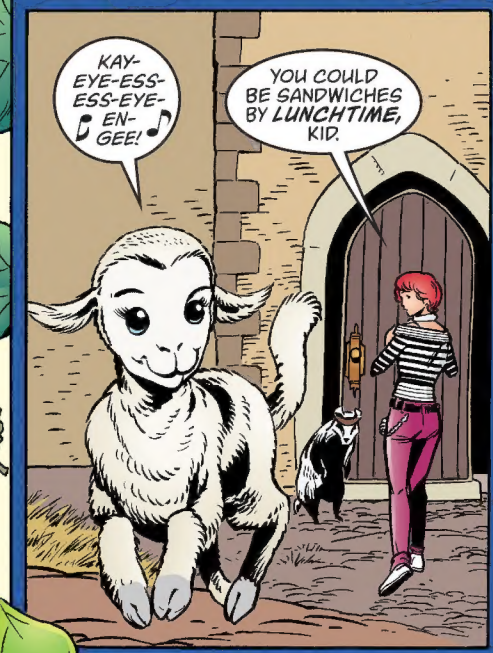
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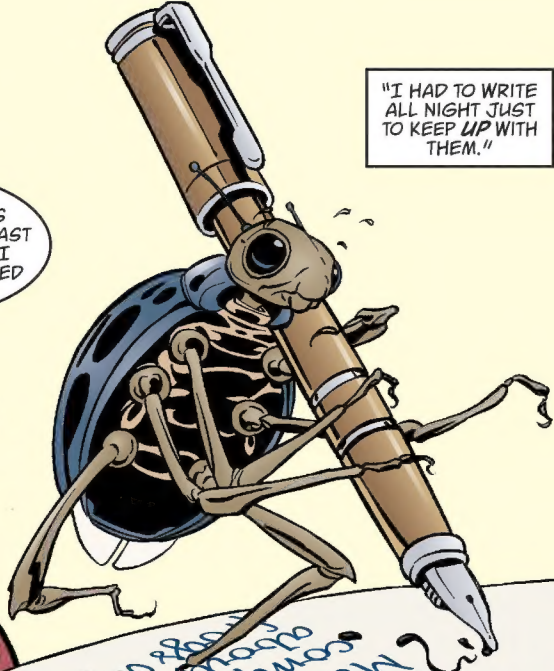




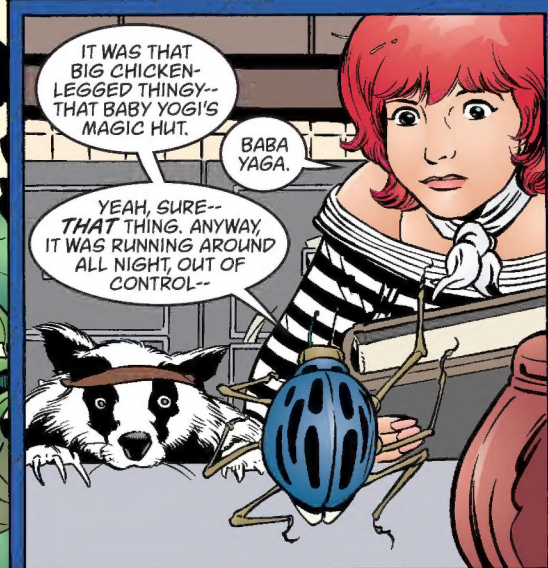
WHY ARE THERE SO MANY **NEW** ENTRIES ON THE DAILY INCIDENT BLOTTER?

BECAUSE THERE WERE LOTS OF **COMPLAINTS** LAST NIGHT. I GUESS I SHOULD'VE MENTIONED THAT, HUH?

"I HAD TO WRITE ALL NIGHT JUST TO KEEP UP WITH THEM."



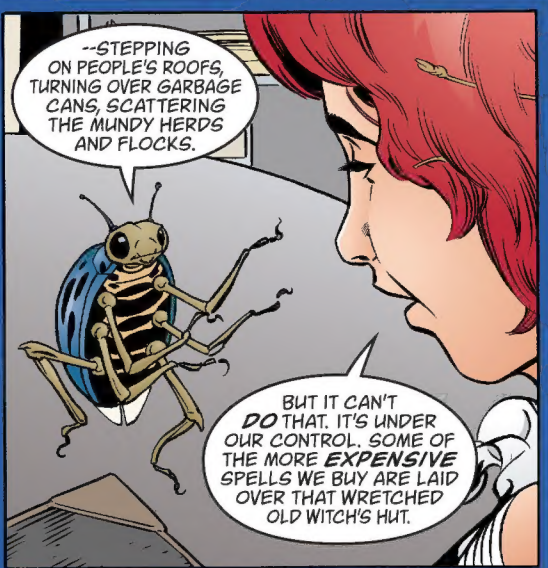
7:06 A.M.
Mrs. Mowsey
complained
about the
garbage
again.



IT WAS THAT BIG CHICKEN-LEGGED THING-- THAT BABY YOGI'S MAGIC HUT.

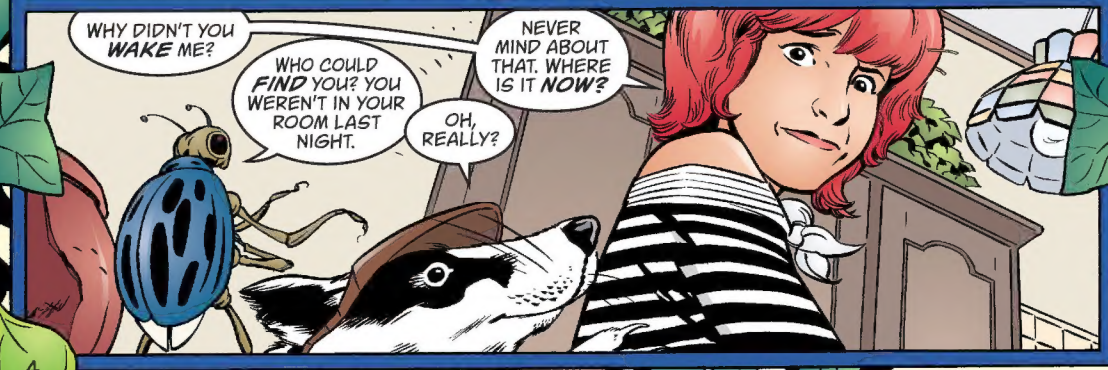
BABA YAGA.

YEAH, SURE-- THAT THING. ANYWAY, IT WAS RUNNING AROUND ALL NIGHT, OUT OF CONTROL--



--STEPPING ON PEOPLE'S ROOFS, TURNING OVER GARBAGE CANS, SCATTERING THE MUNDY HERDS AND FLOCKS.

BUT IT CAN'T DO THAT. IT'S UNDER OUR CONTROL. SOME OF THE MORE **EXPENSIVE** SPELLS WE BUY ARE LAID OVER THAT WRETCHED OLD WITCH'S HUT.



WHY DIDN'T YOU **WAKE** ME?

WHO COULD **FIND** YOU? YOU WEREN'T IN YOUR ROOM LAST NIGHT.

NEVER MIND ABOUT THAT. WHERE IS IT **NOW**?

OH, REALLY?

"OUT IN THE WOODS,
WE THINK IT MAY BE
RUNNING FOR THE
BORDER."

"I ROUNDED UP
WHAT POSSE I
COULD AND
THEY'RE *STILL*
TRYING TO ROPE
THE DAMNED
THING."

**RUN FOR
YOUR LIVES!
RUN FOR YOUR
LIVES!**

THIS TIME
THE SKY REALLY IS
FALLING!

WHERE'S
BOY BLUE?

HE'S BEEN
MISSING FOR
FIVE DAYS.

FIVE
DAYS!

THAT'S
INTOLERABLE!

HE'S IN
LOVE. HE RAN
OFF WITH THAT DITSY
RIDING HOOD
DAME.

YEAH, BUT
FOR *THIS* LONG?
WITHOUT HIS
HORN?

MAYBE THEY ELOPED.
I'LL BET THEY'RE IN ONE
OF THOSE SLEAZY *HONEY-
MOON* HOTELS AT NIAGARA
FALLS RIGHT NOW.

MR. BIGBY
CAN TRACK THEM.
WHERE'S MR.
BIGBY?

HE'S NOT
HERE.

WE
NEED TO
FIND BLUE
ON OUR
OWN.



YOU SHOULD BE QUITE **PROUD** OF YOURSELF.



YOU HELD OUT FOR **EVER** SO LONG.

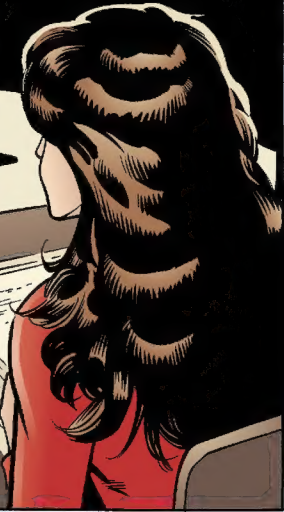
YOU'RE TRULY A **REMARKABLE** YOUNG MAN.



I CAN SEE NOW WHY THE **REAL** RIDING HOOD WAS SO QUICK TO FALL DEEPLY IN LOVE WITH YOU.

SHE STILL **TALKS** ABOUT YOU, FROM TIME TO TIME-- AND NOT JUST UNDER QUESTIONING.

DON'T KNOW YOU **SURVIVED**, OF COURSE.





THAT CAME AS QUITE A SHOCK TO ME, AS WELL.

BUT WHAT CAN WE DO? SOMETIMES OUR INTELLIGENCE SERVICES CAN'T BE ALL ONE EXPECTS.

WE'D HOPED I COULD MAINTAIN THIS IDENTITY AMONG YOU FABLETOWN REFUGEES FOR YEARS TO COME.

BUT IN QUICK SUCCESSION, I RAN INTO TWO FABLES--YOU AND THE WOLF--WHO KNEW THE ORIGINAL RIDE WELL ENOUGH TO EXPOSE ME. BAD LUCK.

SO, I'M RELUCTANTLY FORCED TO ABANDON SUBTERFUGE IN FAVOR OF ONE OF OUR ALTERNATE PLANS OF ACTION.

I DON'T THINK HE CAN HEAR YOU, MISTRESS.

HE'S CONSCIOUS--BARELY. YOUR WOODEN SENSES AREN'T AS ACUTE AS MINE, HUGH.

INSULTING US, MISTRESS?

THAT'S UNCALLED FOR. TRUE, WE MAY BE UNDER YOUR ORDERS ON THIS PARTICULAR MISSION.

BUT NEVER FORGET THAT WE'RE THE CHOSEN ELITE OF THE EMPIRE.

TRUE SONS OF THE EMPEROR.

CARVED IN HIS IMAGE.

WE WON'T BE INSULTED BY MEAT, NO MATTER HOW LOFTY THE PARTICULAR PIECE OF MEAT.

MIND YOURSELVES!



UNDER-
STAND ME,
GENTLE-
MEN?



FORGIVE
US, DREAD
MISTRESS.

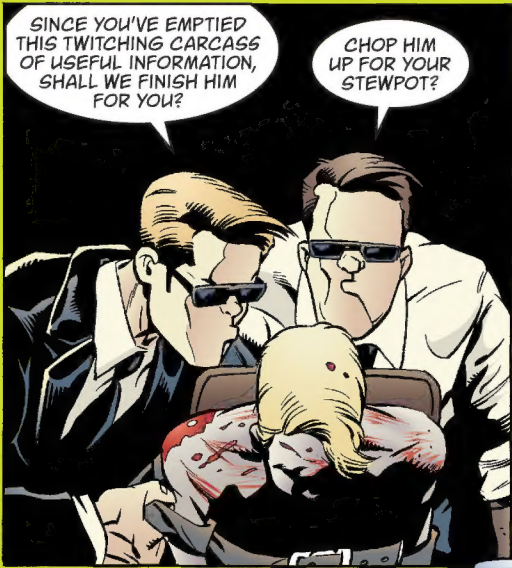
WE MIS-
SPOKE.



WE PAUSE
TO REMIND OUR-
SELVES THAT YOU'RE
OUR EMPEROR'S
MOST TREASURED
LADY.

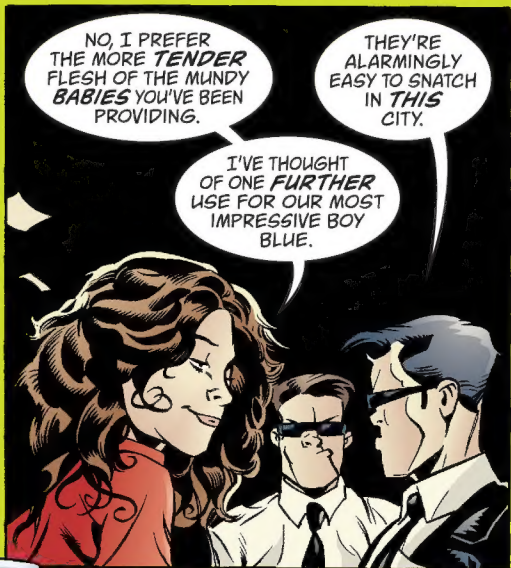
AND HUMBLY
BESECH YOUR
PARDON.

WHAT
ARE YOUR
ORDERS?



SINCE YOU'VE EMPTIED
THIS TWITCHING CARCASS
OF USEFUL INFORMATION,
SHALL WE FINISH HIM
FOR YOU?

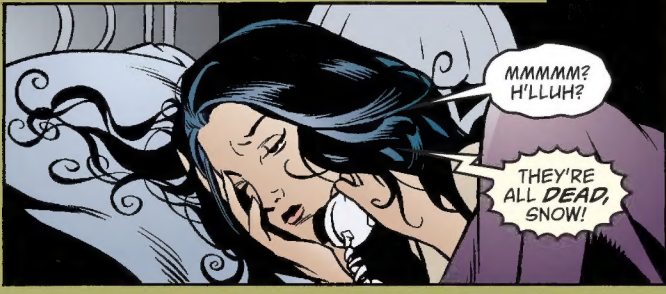
CHOP HIM
UP FOR YOUR
STEWPO?T?



NO, I PREFER
THE MORE *TENDER*
FLESH OF THE MUNDY
BABIES YOU'VE BEEN
PROVIDING.

THEY'RE
ALARMINGLY
EASY TO SNATCH
IN *THIS*
CITY.

I'VE THOUGHT
OF ONE *FURTHER*
USE FOR OUR MOST
IMPRESSIVE BOY
BLUE.



MMMMM?
H'LLUH?

THEY'RE
ALL DEAD,
SNOW!



WHO IS THIS? AND
WHY ARE YOU WAKING
ME IN THE MIDDLE OF
THE NIGHT?

IT'S
BIGBY.



I'M AT
THE NORTH
CANADA GATE,
AND THE ENTIRE
FABLE GARRISON
HERE IS
DEAD.

WIPED
OUT.

IS THE
GATE STILL
SECURED?



NO, IT'S
OPEN AGAIN--
FROM THE OTHER
SIDE.

AND JUDGING BY THE TRACKS IN THE SNOW, THERE'S BEEN **LOTS** OF TRAFFIC THROUGH IT.

AT LEAST THREE DIFFERENT TRUCKS BACKED UP TO THE CAVE ENTRANCE TO LOAD WHATEVER IT IS THEY'VE BROUGHT IN.

SNOW, YOU NEED TO PREPARE FOR THE **WORST**-- AN INVASION.

CRASH FABLETOWN NOW. SHUT IT DOWN.

INSIDE MY OFFICE, IN THE SAFE UNDER MY DESK, YOU'LL FIND THE EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FILE.

WHAT ABOUT YOU? WE NEED YOU **HERE!**

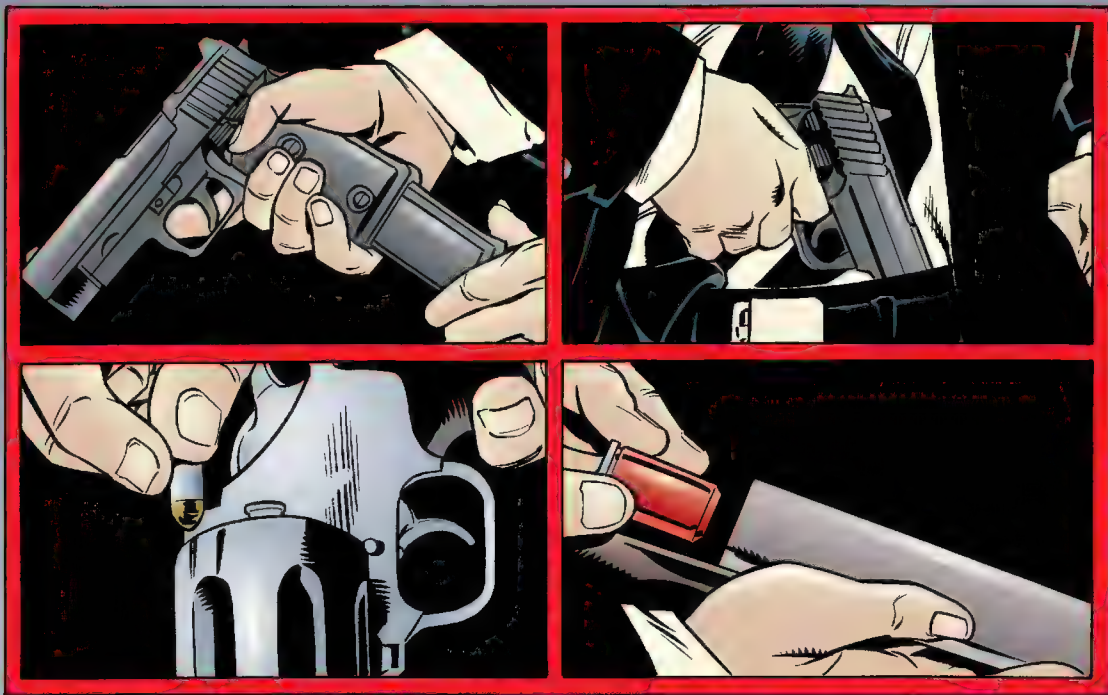
AS SOON AS I DESTROY THE GATE. THEY DIDN'T FIND OUR **BACKUP** DEMOLITIONS. SLOPPY WORK ON THEIR PART.

I CAN STILL COLLAPSE THE CAVE ON OUR SIDE.

COME QUICKLY, BIGBY!

I'M ON MY WAY, SNOW.

UNTIL THEN, IT'S UP TO YOU TO **HOLD ON**.

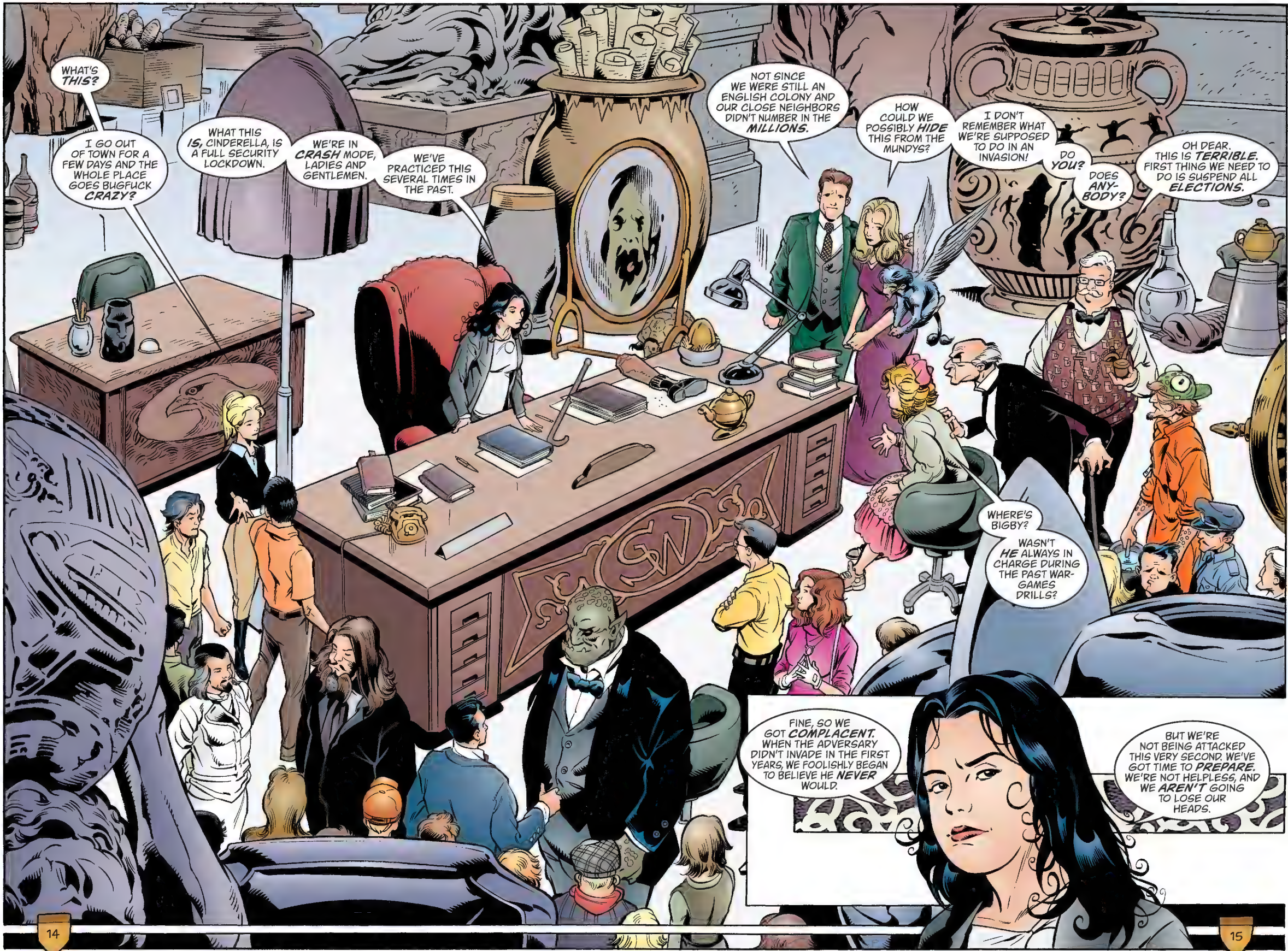


READY,
BROTHERS?

I'M
POSITIVELY
AQUIVER WITH
ANTICIPATION,
BROTHER.

IT IS MY FONDEST
DESIRE TO BUST A HOST OF
CAPS INTO MULTITUDES OF
FLESHY PERSONAGES.





WHAT'S THIS?

I GO OUT OF TOWN FOR A FEW DAYS AND THE WHOLE PLACE GOES BUGFUUCK CRAZY?

WHAT THIS IS, CINDERELLA, IS A FULL SECURITY LOCKDOWN.

WE'RE IN CRASH MODE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

WE'VE PRACTICED THIS SEVERAL TIMES IN THE PAST.

NOT SINCE WE WERE STILL AN ENGLISH COLONY AND OUR CLOSE NEIGHBORS DIDN'T NUMBER IN THE MILLIONS.

HOW COULD WE POSSIBLY HIDE THIS FROM THE MUNDYS?

I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO DO IN AN INVASION!

DO YOU?

DOES ANY-BODY?

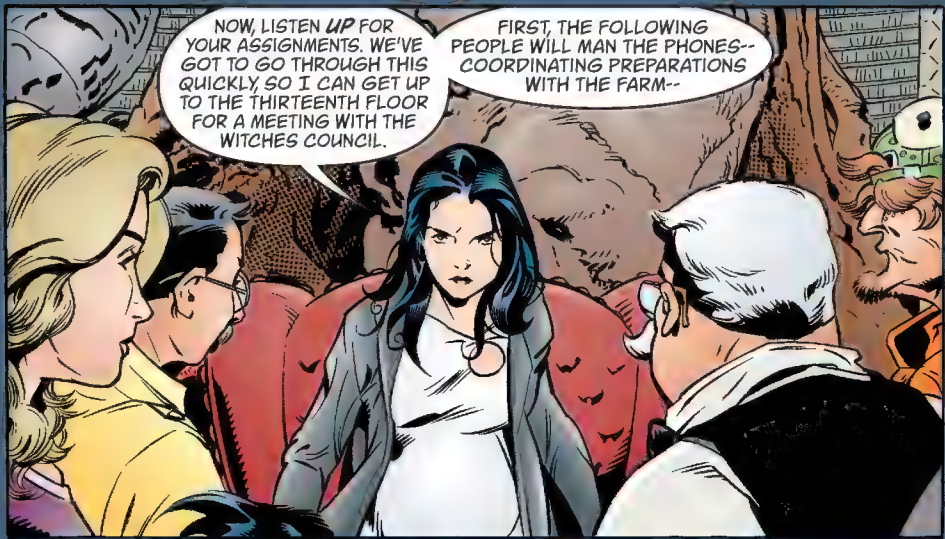
OH DEAR. THIS IS TERRIBLE. FIRST THING WE NEED TO DO IS SUSPEND ALL ELECTIONS.

WHERE'S BIGBY?

WASN'T HE ALWAYS IN CHARGE DURING THE PAST WAR-GAMES DRILLS?

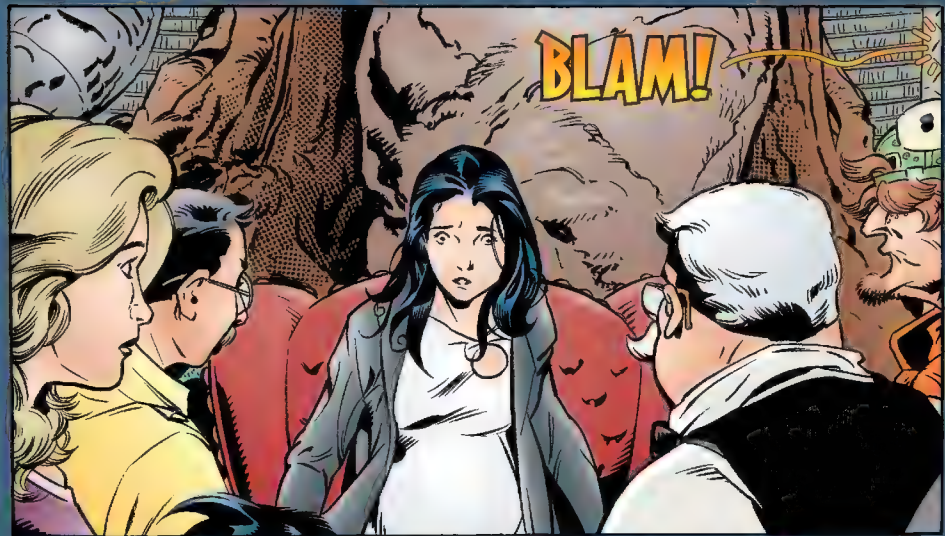
FINE, SO WE GOT COMPLACENT. WHEN THE ADVERSARY DIDN'T INVADE IN THE FIRST YEARS, WE FOOLISHLY BEGAN TO BELIEVE HE NEVER WOULD.

BUT WE'RE NOT BEING ATTACKED THIS VERY SECOND. WE'VE GOT TIME TO PREPARE. WE'RE NOT HELPLESS, AND WE AREN'T GOING TO LOSE OUR HEADS.



NOW, LISTEN UP FOR YOUR ASSIGNMENTS. WE'VE GOT TO GO THROUGH THIS QUICKLY, SO I CAN GET UP TO THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR FOR A MEETING WITH THE WITCHES COUNCIL.

FIRST, THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE WILL MAN THE PHONES-- COORDINATING PREPARATIONS WITH THE FARM--



BLAM!



THAT SOUNDED LIKE A--
WAS THAT A SHOT?



THEY'RE BACK!
YOU DIDN'T BELIEVE ME, AND NOW THEY'RE BACK, AND THEY SHOT TRUSTY JOHN!



SEE?

THESE ARE THE FREAKS WHO BEAT THE SHIT OUT OF ME!

STAY BACK.

WE'RE NOT HERE TO CAUSE TROUBLE.

NOT THIS TRIP.

WE DIDN'T EVEN KILL YOUR MEATHEAD DOORMAN, AS WE COULD HAVE WHEN HE TRIED TO IMPEDE US.

AND THIS THING IS STILL ALIVE, TOO.

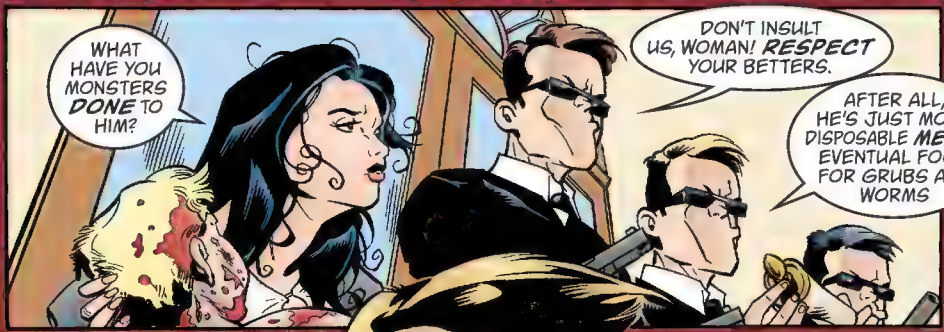
A GENEROUS GIFT FROM OUR BENEVOLENT MISTRESS.



BLUE!

...URR-RGGH...

PROOF OF OUR PEACEFUL INTENT.



WHAT HAVE YOU MONSTERS DONE TO HIM?

DON'T INSULT US, WOMAN! RESPECT YOUR BETTERS.

AFTER ALL, HE'S JUST MORE DISPOSABLE MEAT-- EVENTUAL FOOD FOR GRUBS AND WORMS



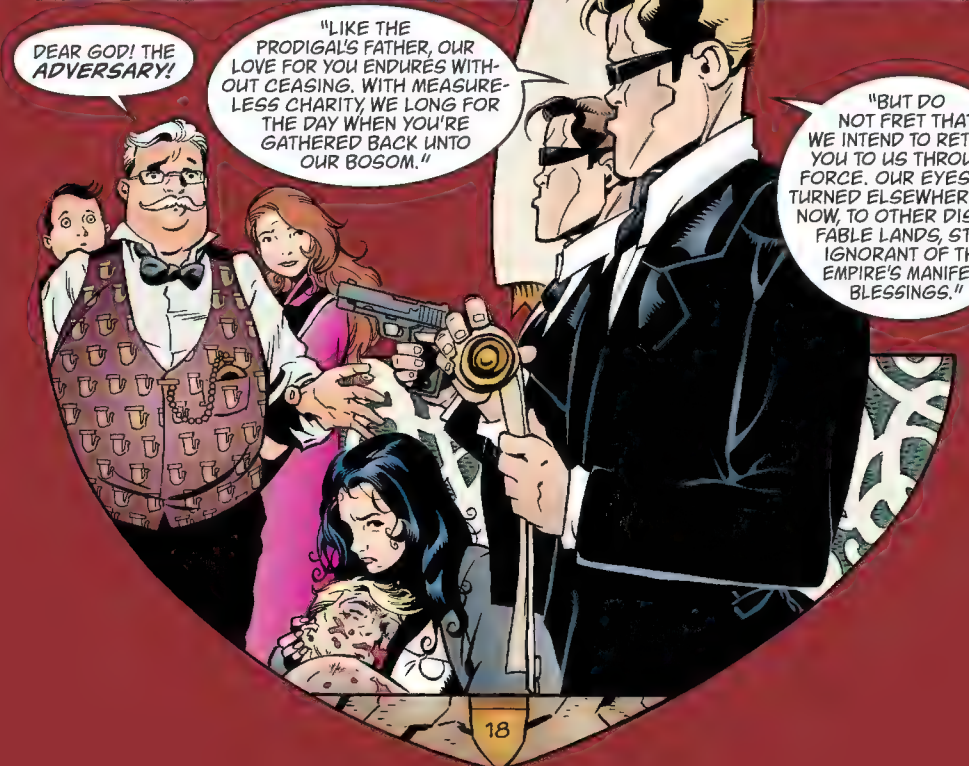
WE'RE HERE TO DELIVER A MESSAGE-- A VERY IMPORTANT LETTER.

STAND BACK AND LISTEN--WITH APPROPRIATE SILENCE AND AWE.



"TO OUR SUBJECTS IN FABLETOWN AND THROUGHOUT THE MUNDANE WORLD."


"GREETINGS, FROM YOUR EMPEROR."



DEAR GOD! THE ADVERSARY!

"LIKE THE PRODIGAL'S FATHER, OUR LOVE FOR YOU ENDURES WITHOUT CEASING. WITH MEASURELESS CHARITY, WE LONG FOR THE DAY WHEN YOU'RE GATHERED BACK UNTO OUR BOSOM."


"BUT DO NOT FRET THAT WE INTEND TO RETURN YOU TO US THROUGH FORCE. OUR EYES ARE TURNED ELSEWHERE FOR NOW, TO OTHER DISTANT FABLE LANDS, STILL IGNORANT OF THE EMPIRE'S MANIFEST BLESSINGS."



"OUR FERVENT WISH IS TO LEAVE YOU, PEACEFUL IN YOUR SELF-IMPOSED EXILE, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS YOU AWAKEN TO YOUR OWN FOLLY AND REJOIN US WILLINGLY."



"IN FURTHERANCE THEREOF I SEND YOU OUR IMPERIAL ENVOY, A GREAT LADY OF OUR COURT, COMMONLY KNOWN AS RED RIDING HOOD. UNDER OUR PROTECTION, SHE SPEAKS WITH OUR VOICE."

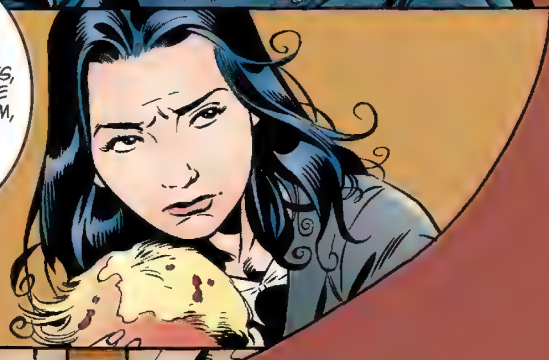


"SHE WILL WORK TIRELESSLY TO ACHIEVE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN US."

"BUT, IN THE MEANTIME, WE CAN'T LET YOU REMAIN A THORN IN OUR SIDE--A DISTRACTION FROM OTHER MATTERS OF CONCERN."

"THEREFORE, IN ONE DAY, A TROOP OF OUR IMPERIAL AGENTS WILL ARRIVE, TO TAKE POSSESSION OF ALL MAGIC PROPERTY ILLEGALLY REMOVED FROM OUR LANDS."

"TAKE NOTE THAT SUCH ITEMS ARE KNOWN TO US, IN DETAIL."



"IF YOU ATTEMPT TO HIDE THESE THINGS, EVEN IN YOUR HEARTS, THERE WILL WE RAKE FOR THEM, IN THE FULLNESS OF OUR POWER AND WRATH."



IS THAT IT?

THUS THE LETTER ENDS.

THEN HAND IT OVER AND GET THE HELL OUT WHILE YOU STILL CAN.



TREASURE THIS DOCUMENT. IT'S A SACRED THING.

BUT THERE'S ONE OTHER MATTER NOT ANTICIPATED IN OUR MASTER'S LETTER.

WHO KNEW HE WAS HERE, AMONG YOU?



TOMORROW, WHEN WE RETURN TO COLLECT OUR EMPEROR'S PROPERTY, WE WILL ALSO BE TAKING THE NOBLE PINOCCHIO WITH US.

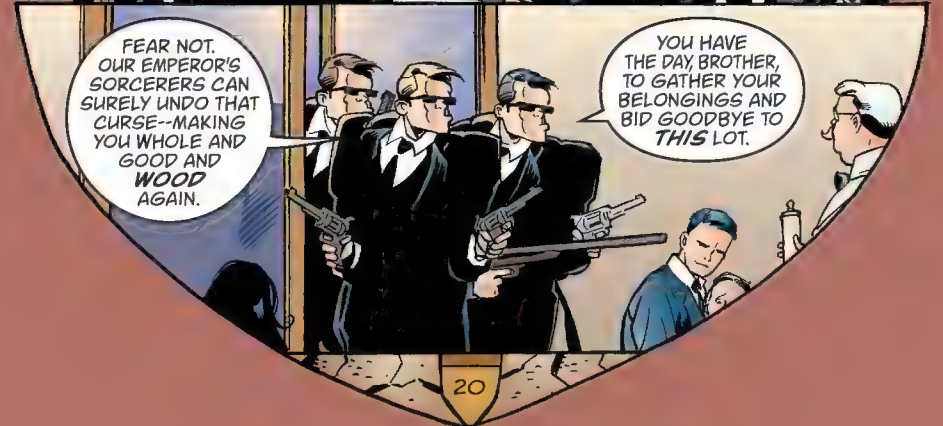
WHAT?

WHY ME?



BECAUSE YOU'RE THE FIRST CARVED. OUR ELDEST BROTHER.

BELOVED TO US--EVEN THOUGH HORRIBLY TAINTED BY YOUR UNFORTUNATE TRANSFORMATION TO MEAT.



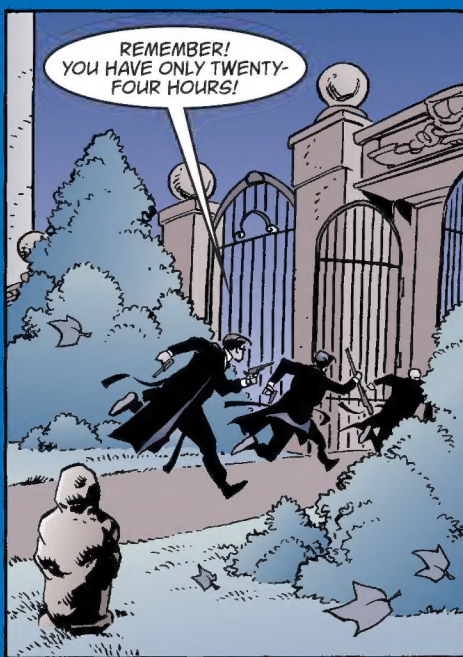
FEAR NOT. OUR EMPEROR'S SORCERERS CAN SURELY UNDO THAT CURSE--MAKING YOU WHOLE AND GOOD AND WOOD AGAIN.

YOU HAVE THE DAY, BROTHER, TO GATHER YOUR BELONGINGS AND BID GOODBYE TO THIS LOT.



EVERYONE STAY INSIDE UNTIL WE'VE LONG DEPARTED.

UNLESS YOU WISH TO RECEIVE TRULY PROMISCUOUS AMOUNTS OF GUNFIRE.



REMEMBER! YOU HAVE ONLY TWENTY-FOUR HOURS!



THEY WERE PINOCCHIOS!

ALL THREE OF THEM, GODDAMNED PINOCCHIOS! WOODEN FUCKING DOLLS!

NO WONDER I COULDN'T HURT THEM!

NOT NOW, JACK.

FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE, SHOW SOME SENSE OF THE MOMENT.

FLYCATCHER--CHARMING--DRIVE BLUE AND JOHN TO THE HOSPITAL--IMMEDIATELY.

WE'LL LET DOCTOR SWINEHEART KNOW YOU'RE ON THE WAY.

THEN GET BACK HERE AS SOON AS YOU CAN. WE HAVE MUCH TO DO.



THE HOSPITAL CALLED BOY BLUE'S STILL ALIVE.

PINOCCHIO DID YOU HEAR ME?

THEY THINK HE'LL BE OKAY.

YEAH, FLY, I HEARD THAT'S GREAT NEWS.

HEY, WHAT'RE YOU DOING?

PACKING. YOU HEARD WHAT THEY SAID. I HAVE TO GO WITH THEM IN ORDER TO PREVENT A WAR.

THREE THAT WE *KNOW* OF. AND NOTHING ABOUT THEM WILL BE EASY. REMEMBER, I USED TO BE ONE. THEY'RE TOUGH, STRONG, NEED NO FOOD, NOR SLEEP, AND FEEL NO PAIN.

WE'RE IN *BIG* TROUBLE.

BUT THEY'RE JUST THREE WOODEN DOLLS. WE CAN TAKE THEM EASY.

BESIDES, I HAVE TO GO ANYWAY. DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT THEIR EXISTENCE *MEANS*?

THE ADVERSARY'S LIVING WOODEN SOLDIERS *PROVE* MY DAD'S ALIVE. HE'S BEEN *MAKING* THEM.

PAPA GEPETTO IS THE ADVERSARY'S *SLAVE*.

NEXT:
CALL TO ARMS!

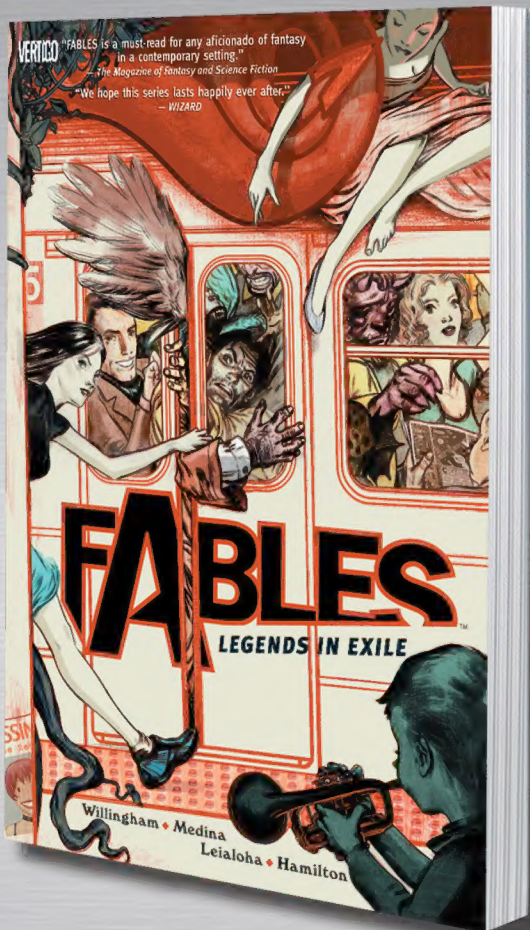
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BILL WILLINGHAM

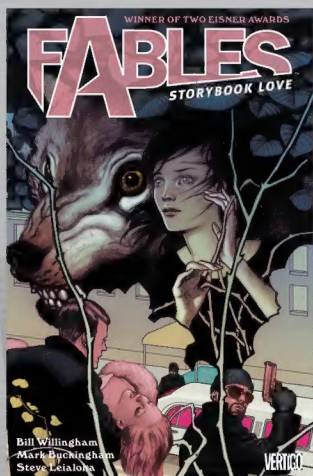
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."
– THE WASHINGTON POST



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- VOL. 2: ANIMAL FARM
- VOL. 3: STORYBOOK LOVE
- VOL. 4: MARCH OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS
- VOL. 5: THE MEAN SEASONS
- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
- VOL. 8: WOLVES
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE
- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
- VOL. 12: THE DARK AGES
- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



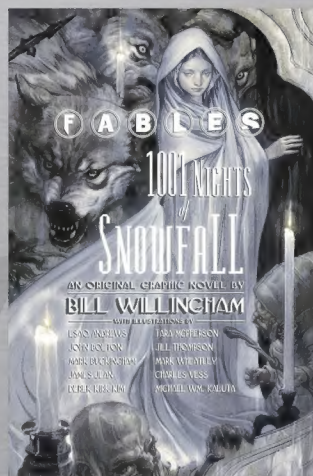
FABLES VOL. 3:
STORYBOOK LOVE



FABLES VOL. 6:
HOMELANDS

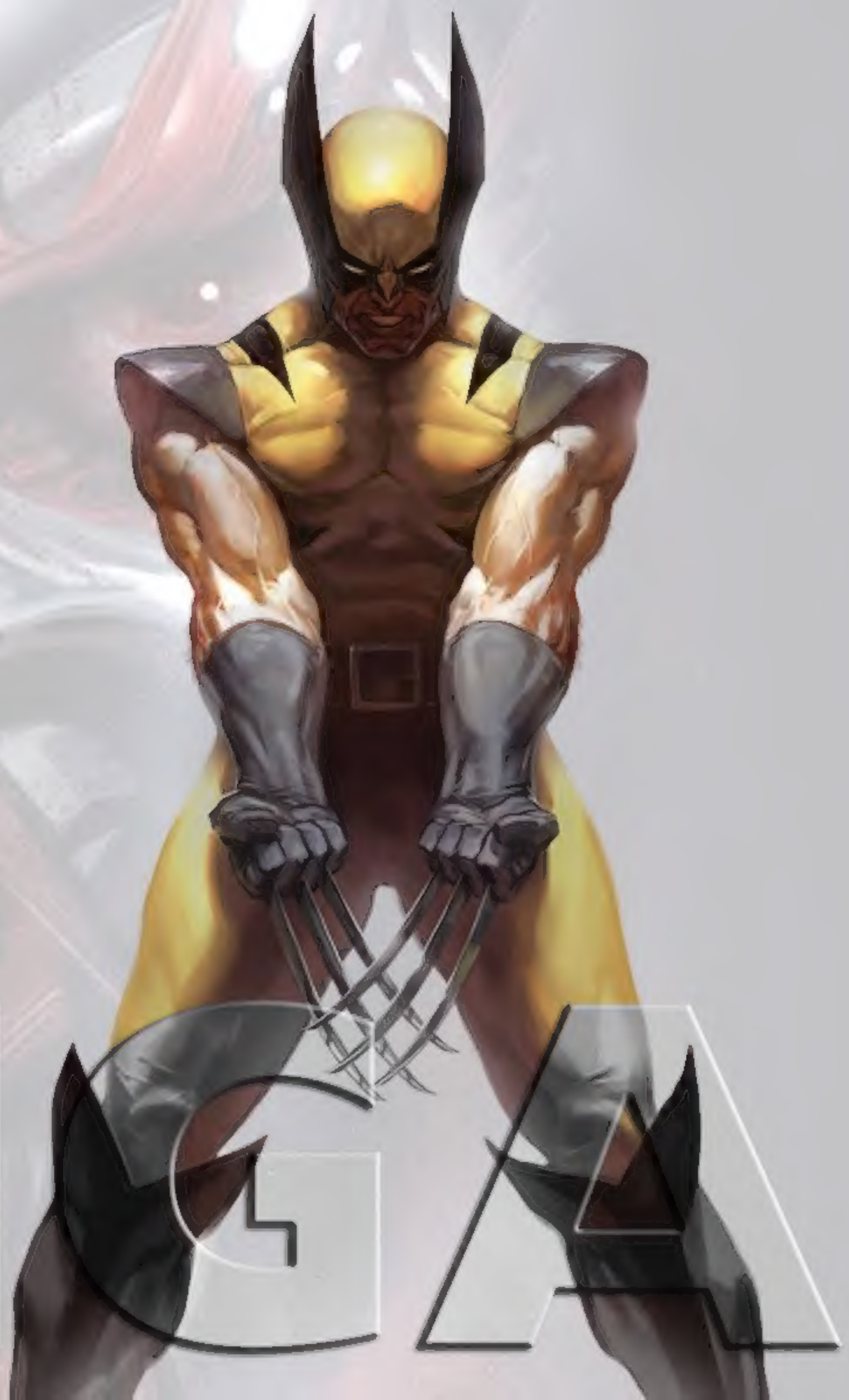


FABLES:
1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



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